

NRRA Q&A webinar with Dr. Ben Locwin an expert on infectious disease epidemiology

We're fortunate to have some good science pertaining to the corona virus. It was first observed 60 years ago and has continued to be studied. What they have observed:

- The virus's primary route of entry is through respiratory pathways and exits the infected person by the aerosols emitted from respiration, coughing, sneezing, talking and laughing.
- Although probable, there are no known cases of contraction from self-inoculation by touching a contaminated surface. Risk of contracting the virus from surfaces compared to air is low.
- The virus is encapsulated in a fatty coating. When the lipid (fatty) layer is removed, the virus is disabled. Soap is effective in destroying this fatty layer.
- A person may be contagious 2 – 14 days after exposure without showing signs and may continue to not be ill (asymptomatic) but contagious.

Distancing should be the highest priority, according to Dr. Locwin. Because of the last bullet item, he advises maintaining distances of separation of at least 10 feet. The more separation we maintain, the less chance we have of inhalation of infected particles.

Additional protections he advises for public exposure and for those of us handling material the public has handled is hand hygiene, masks and gloves.

He believes the probability there would be any live viral particles on the material we receive at the recycling facility to be low. We're more at risk from dust, impalement from high velocity particles and sharps. Personal protective equipment is already made available to mitigate these hazards because they existed before the pandemic.

Take aways and cautionary tips:

- Maintaining physical distance from everyone except members of our own household is one of our best defenses.
- Be mindful in public places to not touch your face if you're touching surfaces. Wash hands frequently and don't handle personal items such as cell phones until hands are washed.
- **Masks are an effective barrier.** When asked about cloth masks, Dr. Locwin reminded us the virus cannot be transmitted without a carrier molecule which are the aerosolized droplets emitted from our respiratory tracts (again, laughing, talking, breathing, sneezing, coughing) so even a *cloth mask is a suitable barrier*.
- Cloth masks can and should be washed daily in soapy water or at least 70% isopropanol alcohol. Use caution handling the mask if there's a chance the outside may have received droplets from a potentially infected person.
- Avoid mutual air exchange with other people. They could be asymptomatic and contagious.
- Disinfect all shared equipment.

- Wearing a washable outer layer or apron further reduces potential transmission from contact with potentially contaminated material. Aprons and outer clothing should be removed before eating and heading home and hands washed immediately after removal of outer wear.
- If gloves are worn, still avoid touching your face, cell phones or any other personal items until gloves are removed and HANDS WASHED.
- All of this requires a behavioral shift which may be easier for some than others. For some, the donning of a facial barrier and gloves helps them to be more mindful of distancing practices. For others, there may be a false sense of security created by the PPE. We still need to maintain distancing, avoid touching our faces and wash hands frequently.

Some additional measures (not included in the attachment) suggested by him and NRRRA communities and staff are:

- Delineate boxes of 6' square for customers to deposit MSW or recycling
- No swap shops (we had already discontinued this a few weeks ago)
- Buildings and offices closed to the public (again, discontinued from the start)
- Continue not conducting monetary transactions (you may want to consider an alternate method? Some transfer stations are only taking checks in an outdoor setting with personnel wearing appropriate PPE [mask, gloves])
- Encourage reduced visits to the facility or extend the hours of operation so as to maintain continued use with a reduction in traffic